

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8587

INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T GUATEMALA 5746

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, GT, BH, UK

SUBJ: BELIZE: ALLEGED BRITISH MILITARY MOVES

1. FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA URGENTLY ASKED AMBASSADOR TO CALL AFTERNOON OCT 16. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID PRESIDENT IS " MOST CONCERNED" OVER REPORTS JUST RECIEVED INDICATING FURTHER BRITISH MILITARY MOVES. IN ADDITION TO EARLIER REPORT OF ARRIVAL OCT 12 OF FIVE (SIC) C-130 AIRCRAFT IN BELIZE, GUATEMALANS NOW HAVE INFORMATION EIGHT MORE C-130'S ARRIVED THERE THE FOLLOWING DAY. MORE UPSETTING WAS THE REPORT JUST RECEIVED THAT TWO BRITISH FRIGATES ARE PRESENTLY OFF THE SOUTH AND CENTRAL COAST OF BELIZE WHERE THEY ARE ENGAGING IN "INTENSIVE TRAINING" WITH HELICOPTERS AND SMOKE GENERATORS. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION INDICATES THE ARRIVAL OF FOUR TANK TRUCKS IN BELIZE.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID PRESIDENT IS PLANNING TO ORDER A MILITARY RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHT,PERHAPS TOMORROW OCT 17, TO VERIFY THE PRESENCE OF THE TWO BRITISH FRIGATES AND INVITED THE AMBASSADOR TO SEND A US MILITARY OFFICER ON THE RECONNAIS- SANCE FLIGHT, AN INVITATION WHICH THE AMBASSADOR PROMPTLY, POLITELY AND FIRMLY DECLINED.AMBASSADOR SAID HE PERSONALLY DOUBTED THE WISDOM OF SENDING OUT A GUATEMALAN RECONNAISSANCE

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PLANE AND HOPED IN ANY EVENT THE PLANE WOULD NOT OVERFLY BELIZE

TERRITORY AND ESPECIALLY WOULD NOT GO NEAR THE AIRFIELD AT BELIZE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE "WAS SURE" THE PLANE WOULD STAY OFF THE COAST IN ORDER TO SPOT THE FRIGATES AND WOULD NOT OVERFLY LAND AREAS.

3. AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING ONE BRITISH FRIGATE THE "MINERVA" WAS FREQUENTLY IN THE ARE OF BELIZE AND HE WOULD SEE NOTHING UNUSUAL IN ITS PRESENCE. HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF A SECOND BRITISH FRIGATE NOR OF "INTENSIVE TRAINING" WITH HELICOPTERS AND SMOKE GENERATORS. HE WOULD MAKE IMMEDIATE INQUIRIES, HOWEVER, AND WOULD INFORM THE FOREIGN MINISTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF SUCH FACTS AS HE WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN.

4. THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF REMAINING CALM AND OF REFRAINING FROM HASTY ACTION IN RESPONSE TO UNVERIFIED REPORTS, PARTICULARLY ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT BE REGARDED AS PROVOCATIVE OR WHICH MIGHT BE MISINTERPRETED AND CAUSE COUNTER-REACTIONS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID IT WAS FORTUNATE THAT WORD OF THESE BRITISH MOVES HAD NOT YET REACHED THE NEWSPAPERS IN GUATEMALA,BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS DISTURBED AND UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM HIS MILITARY OFFICERS TO TAKE SOME COUNTERING ACTION.

5. AMBASSADOR WOULD APPRECIATE ANY HARD FACTS WHICH HE CAN PASS ON TO THE GOG AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT.
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